

IV. Residency Verification

The State Education Office shall “formulate and promulgate rules for the documentation and verification of District residency for public and public charter school students, pursuant to sections 2 and 3 of the District of Columbia Nonresident Student Tuition Act”.

A. Summary Chart

	Pre-Transfer of Function	Post-Transfer of Function
Responsible Office and Budget Authority	DC Financial Responsibility and Management Assistance Authority	State Education Office
Personal Services	Not available	\$20,000 est.
Program Costs	Not applicable	Not applicable

B. Background

Legislation. In the District of Columbia School Reform Act of 1995 (DC Code § 31-2853), the United States Congress directed that funding for District of Columbia Public Schools and public charter schools be based upon a uniform per student funding formula, thereby tying school funding directly to enrollment. As a consequence, residency verification and documentation for the purpose of school enrollment became and continues to be a significant challenge for the District.

The United States Congress also established the District of Columbia Financial Responsibility and Management Authority ("Authority") in 1995 to eliminate budget deficits and management inefficiencies in government, and for other purposes (Public Law 104-8). The Authority has served as the governing body of the District of Columbia Public Schools since November 1996 and it created an Emergency Transitional Education Board of Trustees to assist in carrying out those responsibilities. Through the Emergency Transitional Education Board of Trustees, the Authority issued the most recent rules governing residency verification for the purpose of school enrollment. The rules, issued in March 1998, amended portions of Chapter 20 of Title 5 of the DC Municipal Regulations regarding proofs of residency required of DC public schools.

History. To date, both District of Columbia public schools and public charter schools have procedures consistent with the Emergency Transitional Education Board of Trustees' rules governing proof of residency required of District of Columbia Public School students. The Student Accounting Branch of the DC Public Schools issued SY 2000-01 Reporting Student membership Procedures in August 2000.

For public charter schools the development of procedures for verifying residency was more complex:

- (1) The DC School Reform Act of 1995 exempts public charter schools from District of Columbia statutes, policies, rules, and regulations established for the District of Columbia Public Schools by the Superintendent, Board of

Education, Mayor, Council of the District of Columbia, or the Authority, except as otherwise provided in a school's charter or this subtitle. [§2204(c)(3)(B)]; *and*

- (2) This same law requires public charter schools to submit an annual report to the Mayor and the Board of Education on, among other things, the number of students including nonresident students and students with special needs, enrolled in each grade from preschool through grade twelve...

To allay confusion surrounding questions related to procedures for public charter schools and to facilitate consistency in procedures used across the public education system in the city, the Financial Responsibility and Management Authority, using a contractor, developed and published procedures in a manual, District of Columbia Public Charter Schools' Enrollment Procedures. Executive Directors of the two chartering authorities and representatives from individual public charter schools were briefed on the manual and provided implementation guidance.

Current Status. Both public schools and public charter schools have become increasingly proficient in obtaining documentation required as proof of residency and in recognizing and responding to the non-traditional circumstances of a growing number of students and families. However, there are continuing problems in the effort to verify and document residency of eligible students.

In July 2000, the Council of the District of Columbia passed the State Education Office Establishment Act of 2000, which provided for the transfer to and assumption of responsibility for formulation and promulgation of rules for documenting and verifying District residency for public and public charter school students by a new State Education Office under the Office of the Mayor of the District of Columbia. While the State Education Office will write and issue rules governing documentation and verification of District residency for District of Columbia Public Schools and public charter schools, District of Columbia Public Schools, the two chartering authorities, and the public charter schools will continue to be responsible for actually administering the rules.

Accomplishments to Date. Recently, a Technical Work Group was established by the State Education Office to assist the Office in developing a policy governing verification of District residency for the purpose of school enrollment. This group was convened by the State Education Office in accordance with provisions of the Public School Enrollment Integrity Emergency Amendment Act of 2000. Members of the Technical Work Group include representatives from the Office of the Mayor, the Council's Committee on Education, Libraries and Recreation, the Superintendent of the District of Columbia Public Schools, each of the chartering authorities, and the DC Public Charter School Coalition. Additional individuals with expertise in specific areas were also invited to join the Technical Work Group.

The Group agreed upon a set of principles to guide the development of a policy governing verification of District residency and have drafted a policy statement. Once

approved by the interim Director of the State Education Office, the policy will be submitted for approval by the Mayor of the District of Columbia. The approved policy statement will establish parameters for the formulation and promulgation of rules for documentation and verification of District residency for public and public charter school students.

C. Proposal for Transfer of the Function

Authority. The State Education Office Establishment Act of 2000 provides for the transfer and assumption by the State Education Office of the District of Columbia of the responsibility of formulating and promulgating rules for the documentation and verification of District residency for public and public charter school students, pursuant to sections 2 and 3 of the District of Columbia Nonresident Tuition Act.

Leadership and Responsibilities. The State Education Office will provide leadership and direction to the effort to develop rules for documenting and verifying District residency for public and public charter school students. In preparation for formulating draft rules governing residency verification, State Education Office staff will review guidelines and rules of other urban school districts, particularly those with increasing numbers of students from non-traditional families and students from families with special circumstances. The current Technical Work Group, working in an advisory capacity, will review current rules governing residency verification in the District of Columbia and discuss their experiences using these rules. If appropriate, representatives from nearby school districts (Falls Church, Arlington, and Montgomery County) may be invited to discuss their experiences with student residency verification. The Technical Work Group may recommend to the State Education Office modifications or changes in the existing rules and may also make suggestions to the State Education Office on the content of rules to be issued.

Timelines. Rules governing residency verification for purposes of school enrollment will be published for public comment in the DC Register in March 2001. Final rules will be issued in April 2001 so that the District of Columbia Public Schools and public charter schools may notify parents of requirements for proof of residency prior to registration for school year 2001-2002.

Staff Required To Carry Out Function. It is expected that responsibility for developing rules governing residency verification will be included in the portfolio of a professional staff person, with competencies and experience in preparation of government rules and regulations, managing and providing leadership to issue-specific work groups, problem solving, and preparing and analyzing technical reports.

First Year Budget Requirements. The most significant cost will be that of professional and support staff time.

Factors With Potential for Disrupting Services to Students. Since there are rules and procedures currently in place, the transfer of this function to the State Education Office has little if any potential for disrupting services to students.

D. Schedule of Key First-Year Tasks

The following tasks are critical to first year implementation of State Education Office responsibility for formulating and promulgating rules for the documentation and verification of District residency for public and public charter school students.

Task Description	Projected Completion Date
1. Assumption of full responsibility for formulating and promulgating rules for the documentation and verification of District residency for public and public charter school students	No later than April 1, 2001
2. Formal recognition of the Technical Work Group	Immediately
3. Identifying and employing a qualified professional staff person	March 2001
4. Preparing and submitting for approval rules governing documentation and verification of residency	March 2001
5. Issuing rules	April 2001
6. Considering proposal to have State Education Office carry out 'waiver' function	May 2001
7. Monitoring of implementation of rules	Continuing